

**ABIL****ARIZONA BRIDGE TO INDEPENDENT LIVING**

5025 E. Washington St., Ste. 200
Phoenix, AZ 85034-2005
V 602.256.2245 TTY/TDD 602.296.0591
F 602.254.6407 www.abil.org

May 9, 2013

Tom Betlach, Director
Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System
801 East Jefferson Street
Phoenix, AZ 85034

Dear Mr. Betlach:

Arizona Bridge to Independent Living (ABIL) is one of five Centers for Independent Living in Arizona. We are a non-profit organization providing advocacy and programs by and for people with all types of disabilities and chronic illness, primarily in Maricopa, Gila and Pinal Counties. We wholeheartedly support Governor Brewer's restoration plan for Medicaid (AHCCCS).

The Governor's plan will restore the Proposition 204 population; Arizona voters have twice approved to provide AHCCCS coverage to Arizonans who are at or below 100% of federal poverty level. We appreciate the Governor's action on behalf of *all* Arizonans to acknowledge and restore the will of Arizona voters. As we understand it, over 200,000 AHCCCS members have lost health care over the last three years, and in January 2014, another 60,000 will lose AHCCCS coverage if the legislature does not take action to approve the Governor's plan. The proposed AHCCCS restoration under the Affordable Care Act will literally save lives. We get calls from Arizonans looking desperately for health care for diagnosed cancer and other disabling and life-threatening illnesses, and we have nowhere to send them. This is more than heartbreaking. This is unnecessary when we have a way to offer healthcare that will benefit all Arizonans, whether they qualify for AHCCCS or not.

The benefits to the Medicaid restoration would be many:

- Life saving for those facing treatable illnesses that are terminal without appropriate health treatment, in addition to relief of needless suffering;
- Preventative treatments that would avoid the development of more costly and potentially disabling illness and injury;
- Improved productivity of Arizonans able to receive chronic illness treatment, in order to avoid complications and secondary illness and maintain or return to employment and community volunteerism. (Asthma, diabetes, lupus, arthritis, multiple sclerosis, and high blood pressure, to name a few);
- Therapies that are key to successful rehabilitation for many disabilities;

- Treatment for Arizonans with mental illness that relieves suffering and improves productive community integration, avoiding unproductive criminalization when medication, therapy and case management would be more appropriate ;
- More Arizonans would be able to be treated in appropriate medical settings, leaving ERs for those with true emergencies; and
- Relief for family and friends who have loved ones unable to afford desperately-needed health care.

We support the Governor's Medicaid restoration plan with our minds as well as our hearts. This is a good economic deal for the citizens of Arizona. Medicare restoration to Prop 204 levels and up to 133% FPL would bring over \$1.6 Billion into Arizona's economy. ***This is an unprecedented opportunity with no expense to Arizona's general fund.***

Uncompensated emergency department costs are shouldered by private and public employers that provide health care for our employees. Some rural hospitals report that they are facing financial disaster coping with uncompensated care expenses. The Arizona Small Business Association, the Greater Phoenix Economic Council and many Chambers of Commerce, County Board of Supervisors, County Sheriff Associations and Arizona American Indian Tribal Councils support the Governor's Medicaid restoration plan.

Governor Brewer's Medicaid restoration plan is well thought out. We applaud that the plan has incorporated Arizona's ability to discontinue the program if the federal rules change in a way that makes it no longer affordable for Arizona. We also applaud the private-public partnership fostered with Arizona's hospitals to fund Arizona's share of the cost. **Governor Brewer's proposed Medicaid restoration is a WIN-WIN for all Arizonans.**

Yours Truly,



Amina Kruck
VP of Advocacy
Arizona Bridge to Independent Living
Disability Empowerment Center
5025 E. Washington Street, Suite 200
Phoenix, AZ 85034
602-443-0722 – office
602-980-1144 – mobile
aminak@abil.org

www.abil.org

